CONSUMER TIME

THE COTTON FABRIC SITUATION

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1. SOUND: CASH REGISTER RINGS TWICE....MONEY IN TILL

2. JOHN: It's CONSUMER TIME!

3. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....CLOSE DRAWER.

4. ANNCR: During the next 15 minutes, the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations make their facilities available as a public service for the presentation of CONSUMER TIME by the War Food Administration.

Today, we're going to tell a story about fabrics...about the cotton clothes you'll find (or won't find) this summer... about work clothes, and children's clothes.

I daresay that many of our listeners have already gone shopping for simple, inexpensive cottons this spring...and have found it, well...not too easy. Just by way of illustration on CONSUMER TIME today, suppose we walk into your favorite department store...take the elevator to the third floor...women's and misses' dress department! Over there in the size sixteens... are a couple of neighbors of yours and mine. And they seem to be engaged in a rather familiar conversation...(FADES)

5. MYRTLE: Now I'd say you look pretty as a picture in that dress, Hattie!

6. HATTIE: (DOUBTFULLY) I don't know...somehow it just doesn't suit me... This color yellow isn't exactly what I want.

7. MYRTLE: Oh, nonesence, Hattie...it's a cotton dress, isn't it? Take my advice and buy it now...they'll be scarce as hen's teeth in a month or two.

8. HATTIE: But Myrtle...this waistline! I think it makes me look bunchy....

9. MYRTLE: (IMPATIENT) Oh, Hattie, that's stylish...a little bunchiness.

10. HATTIE: Now you know that isn't so. And look, Myrtle..$15.00! I'm sure it isn't worth that. This material isn't so good, and it really isn't well-made. Look at the narrow seams.

11. MYRTLE: But you expect to pay more, dear...there's a war on, you know.

12. HATTIE: I don't see why I can't get a plain simple little cotton dress for about $5.00, the way I used to.

13. MYRTLE: Don't ask me. All I say is they're scarce, and I buy whatever I can, whether I like it or not.

14. HATTIE: But Myrtle, I'm just afraid that it's one of those dresses I'll buy and then never wear.

15. MYRTLE: (WARNING) All right, Hattie. But remember.....
...your son Bob's coming home, you know...and you should have something new to wear. (LITTLE SNICKER) After all, he must certainly remember your old blue silk jersey, from two years ago!

16. HATTIE: (WAILING) Oh, I know...I know. That's just it. I want something new! Maybe I can alter this dress...remodel it or something. (FADES) Still...$15.00 is a lot to pay for a cotton dress I don't exactly like...

17. ANNCR: And what was the verdict? You guess. We buy the dress. And then...it was a lovely afternoon! Lunch with Myrtle...and a movie at the Hippodrome. And in the box under her arm, a brand new dress. But on the bus going home, Hattie begins to think things over. (Did <u>you</u> ever buy something to wear, and then grow more and more doubtful, about it on your way home that evening.)

18. WOMAN'S VOICE: (FILTER...THINKS TO HERSELF) It really isn't my color... And the material isn't too good. I'll bet it won't wash, either...(PAUSE) But, as Myrtle said....better get a cotton dress while I can, they'll be scarce. (PAUSE) But suppose nobody likes it on me...suppose Bob doesn't like it...I paid so much for it too.

19. SOLDIER: (ON BUS...SORT OF LAUGH) I beg your pardon, lady...but I must say you do look all upset about something. If you don't mind a soldier's opinion, I never saw such a worried expression on such a pretty face.

20. HATTIE: (STARTLED) Oh! Was I? (HALF APOLOGETIC LAUGH) I didn't know.

21. SOLDIER: Sure! I get a kick out of watching people's expressions. And you know something? I usually notice a lady who's got a hat box or a suit box under her arm has got a real happy glint in her eyes. But I couldn't say as much for you just then.

22. HATTIE: (LAUGHING) Well, Sergeant...since you've analyzed me so well... I was just wondering whether I'd made a mistake in the dress I bought. I'm not certain I like it.

23. SOLDIER: Sure. You know why that is? You're a woman. They all think that. Soon's you get home and try it on, you'll change your mind and think it's pretty. You're all alike.

24. HATTIE: I wish you were right, Mr. Know-it-all. But you see, well, I just bought it because cotton dresses may not be so plentiful later on, and I wanted a new one right away.

25. SOLDIER: Well, if you'll pardon me, ma'am, that doesn't sound like very keen reasoning. If you don't like a dress I mean really, you won't wear it, will you?

26. HATTIE: But...you have no idea what it is to have summer coming on, and just simply have nothing new to wear. It's about the most terrible feeling I know of. I get simply desperate, and buy whatever I can get.

27. SOLDIER: Well look now, from what I've read in the papers since I've been back...won't there be more cotton stuff at cheap prices, later on in the year?

28. HATTIE: Oh, I know, I did see something about that...but how can you tell?

29. SOLDIER: Well, I don't know much about it, I admit that. But I heard Ma complaining when I was back home on furlough that she couldn't get cotton clothes for the kids...nor underclothes. Even had a hard time finding shorts and shirts for Pop. She was raising a storm...and then Pop up and reads her a piece in the paper where it said they were going to make more necessary clothes, and prices were coming down. And that seemed to quiet Ma for a while.

30. HATTIE: Well...If I understood a little more about it, maybe I wouldn't get so discouraged. But right now....

31. MAN: (CLEARING THROAT LOUDLY) Well, you two, I was determined I wasn't going to get into this conversation. Don't usually talk to strangers, myself. Particularly on streetcars and buses.

32. HATTIE: (LAUGHING) But you couldn't resist our conversation?

33. MAN: I just heard you getting in deeper and deeper, on something you don't know anything about 'tall.

34. HATTIE: Well, really now...

35. MAN: You sould like a radio program's idea of the typical woman who does and says the wrong things in wartime...If you follow me.

36. SOLDIER: And what do I sound like?

47. MAN: Then you take tents. Over in Europe there were houses and public buildings the Army could sleep in. But what's there to sleep in on the Pacific Islands? Tents. More men going out there...so more tents have to go with 'em.

48. SOLDIER: And actually these tents don't last so long in that climate do they, sir.

49. MAN: You're right, Sergeant! That hot climate and the tropical rains ...the tents get mildewed, and go to pieces. So you see, the Armed Forces need a lot more heavy fabrics in the Pacific war.

50. HATTIE: Well, the fact that the Army needs more...and that there aren't enough people in the mills...means we're in for a really bad cotton shortage, aren't we, then?

51. MAN: Things don't look too good this summer, that's a fact. But that's no reason to rush out and buy up just anything, at any price. You're worse off'n you were before, then; you're just out that money.

52. HATTIE: But what are we supposed to do? Go without new things?

53. MAN: Be patient. First place, the wheels are rolling to get more low-priced garments on the market...more essential clothes, that is.

54. SOLDIER: Yep, that's what I was just telling her, sir. Pop read it in the paper.

55. HATTIE: Well...is it true? Will there be more low-priced clothes later on this year?

56. MAN: Suppose I tell you what's been done in Washington, and you figure it out. I've only got a couple of blocks more to ride, so listen because I'm going to make it fast.

57. HATTIE: Please go ahead.

58. MAN: First place, one of the big problems in clothes is that there've been more of the fancy, high-priced garments...and the low-priced stuff has nearly disappeared off the shelves.

59. HATTIE: Are you telling me!

60. MAN: Then, prices on clothing have gone up. And what's worse... fabrics have been poor quality and there's been cheap shoddy workmanship.

61. HATTIE: That's exactly true...exactly. So what's being done about that?

62. MAN: All right, just this. The WPB and the OPA got together, and set up drastic controls over clothing supplies, prices, and quality. Now don't expect miracles right away...because after all, as you know, there's only just so much material to work with. But the Government's seeing to it that this cotton...and other fabrics for that matter...are going into the most essential clothing. And they've put strict ceiling prices on clothes.

63. HATTIE: Well, I certainly haven't noticed much change yet.

64. SOLDIER: He said it was going to take time.

65. MAN: Yes, it will take time...and as a matter of fact, ~~it may be late fall~~ before you begin to find lower priced essential clothes on the market. ~~But the laws are in effect, and it won't be very long before you're finding a good supply of children's clothes, work clothes, and those low-priced dresses you've been waiting for.~~

66. HATTIE: Well, I'll certainly be glad when ~~that~~ happens.

67. SOLDIER: Would you mind, sir...just how are these laws going to work?

68. MAN: Very simple, very simple. The WPB simply ruled that the manufacturers who produce essential clothing at low and medium prices will get the highest priority on the textiles available for civilians...cotton, rayon, and wool, will go into this low-priced essential clothing.

69. HATTIE: And essential clothing means, what...the children's clothes and work clothes?

70. MAN: Yes...and underwear, shirts, pajamas, blouses...and lower priced coats and dresses too.

71. SOLDIER: And so prices will really drop, then, will they?

72. MAN: They certainly will. You see, the OPA has also issued some orders. One of them says that clothing manufacturers have to figure out the prices they sold garments for in 1943, and that's what they call the Maximum Average Price. Well, from now on, they can't sell clothes any higher than that price. On the average, that is.

73. HATTIE: Well, that ought to make it easier to buy a dress.

74. MAN: It will, all right. And then, you know, you're going to have clothes tagged with ceiling prices...just like on meat and groceries.

75. HATTIE: Oh really!

76. MAN: Yes, on low-priced essential cotton garments...things like children's clothes, and so forth, you'll find tickets showing the actual OPA retail prices in dollars and cents. You'll be able to tell the ceiling price at a glance. The manufacturer will put the prices on himself.

77. HATTIE: And that law is in effect now?

78. MAN: Certainly is. You'll be seeing more of these tagged clothes from now on.

79. HATTIE: But now tell me this. Will I still have to pay a lot for a dress made of cheap material, if it has a lot of fancy trimming on it?

80. MAN: No, they've taken care of that, too. A manufacturer can spend just so much on trimmings...and there won't be a lot of over-finishing anymore.

81. HATTIE: Well, things are certainly looking up!

82. MAN: But as I say...even though there'll be a little more of the low-priced stuff...there will be less of the luxury clothes! Can't have both, you know.

83. HATTIE: Well, now, would you just say to put off buying new clothes until there's more material at low prices?

84. MAN: I'd say simply this. First, look over what you have in your own closet, and do all the mending and remodeling you can, because your old clothes are usually better quality than a lot of stuff you buy today.

85. SOLDIER: That's where a woman's ingenuity comes in...making something old look new!

86. HATTIE: Here I sit on a bus with two men telling me what to wear and how to wear it!

87. MAN: Sure! You can get a free booklet on mending from the Department of Agriculture in Washington, and just get to work on the old clothes.

88. HATTIE: All right. But is it going to be very long before I can buy all the cottons I want? And all the kids' clothes?

89. MAN: Well, I have it on pretty good authority that you better not count on having more cottons, until next summer, unless Japan collapses unexpectedly. Rayon's short...the Armed Forces need a lot more of that. Wool is scarce, too. Might as well face it, and make the best of what you have.

90. SOLDIER: But it does look as though everything that can be done is being done.

91. MAN: Yes, and I like to think that folks nowadays can face the truth and take it.

92. HATTIE: We can take it all right, when we know the reasons why. And I think I understand about this fabrics situation. (LAUGH) After all, I needn't feel bad about not having all the new things I want...every other woman is in the same boat.

93. SOLDIER: You bet! And I can just see it in the fashion magazines this summer. "It's sweet, simple, and oh-so-smart to have that patched-up look!

94. MAN: Well...so you better get that booklet on mending, lady. And goodbye to you, Sergeant. I get off here. (FADE)

(PAUSE)

95. ANNCR: And so day after tomorrow...well, here are Hattie, and her friend Myrtle.

96. MYRTLE: Why, Hattie. I thought I'd see you in your pretty new yellow dress.

97. HATTIE: Oh...that? Why I took that back yesterday!

98. MYRTLE: Why what on earth was the matter with it?

99. HATTIE: Oh...it didn't fit...it wasn't my color...it cost too much money ...I didn't like the material...little things like that.

100. MYRTLE: All right, my dear! You'll be sorry! Just wait! Why...what are you doing there, Hattie?

101. HATTIE: I'm mending...why?

102. MYRTLE: That old blue silk jersey?

103. HATTIE: And why not!

104. MYRTLE: You're going to wear that old thing for Bob's home-coming!

105. HATTIE: He always loved the color, and it's good material, too. No, Myrtle...I've decided...before I get something new, believe me, it's going to be exactly what I want, if I have to spend three weeks looking for it.

106. MYRTLE: Hattie...you've been talking to someone. I can tell by that righteous look in your eye. And what's this? "The ABC's of Mending"! Dear, you're absolutely hopeless. Imagine you getting a booklet on how to mend.

107. HATTIE: I'm starting with this dress...and then I'm mending and altering the children's things. After that, my husbands shirts and underwear. Don't worry, Myrtle...you'll be hauling out the old things and mending, too! And I'll bet you'll be the first to tell me..."Hattie...you know my dear, it's smart to have that patched-up look this season!"

108. ANNCR: Friends, it's true...you will be doing a lot of altering and remodeling on those last summer's clothes! You'll be proud of the professional job you can do on all kinds of mending, with the help of the Department of Agriculture bulletin entitled "The ABC's of Mending". It's yours free. This 23 page booklet, illustrated with diagrams, shows you exactly how to patch and darn; how to mend tears and snags...and how to re-weave knitted materials. Also included are directions on how to mend hosiery, blankets, tableclothes, and upholstery. The booklet, "The ABC's of mending", is yours free. Simply write to CONSUMER TIME, Washington 25, D. C. Be sure to include your name and address and the name of the station to which you are listening. That's "The ABC's of Mending", CONSUMER TIME, Washington 25, D. C.

109. FREYMAN: Next week, is a big event on our program, friends...

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

110. JOHN: Yes...next week, we celebrate the twelfth anniversary of this program...we've been on the air twelve years...and have prepared a specially exciting program, for the occasion!

111. FREYMAN: So...be sure to be with us then, for the anniversary edition of...

112. SOUND: CASH REGISTER....

113. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME!

114. SOUND: CASH REGISTER

115. JOHN: How your money buys a living in wartime!

116. SOUND: CASH REGISTER...CLOSE DRAWER.

117. ANNCR: CONSUMER TIME, written by Christine Kempton, is presented by the War Food Administration, through the facilities of the National Broadcasting Company and its affiliated independent stations. It comes to you from Washington, D. C. This broadcast period for CONSUMER TIME has been made available as a public service.

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